

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

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Western Ninewa Farmers Improve Income – The Ninewa PRT and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) are working together to improve the income and livelihoods of the sheep and olive farmers of western Ninewa, through the Tal Afar Agriculture Cooperative. The project includes the renovation of a building that will house a wool and olive processing center. In addition, UNIDO has provided modern battery-driven shearing tools and training that will allow farmers to harvest more high quality wool.



Iraqi 4-H Club in Diwaniyah- Afak District – PRT Diwaniyah Ag Advisor Omar Shwani developed a 4-H club program with CERP funds to provide education and training on maintaining greenhouses. 4-H is a worldwide youth development organization that empowers youth to reach their potential and teaches hands-on job skills. Volunteer leaders who have knowledge in the project area will assist the youth, and the program will provide some greenhouses so that children in this area of Qadisiyah gain basic training in vegetable production. The youth will learn greenhouse skills, leadership, public speaking, record keeping, and community service. Youth selected are between 10-15 years of age. The club consists of 13 girls and 12 boys.



Iraqis Gain Knowledge in Nebraska to Rebuild Its Ag Sector –They traveled nearly 7,000 miles from Baghdad to stand in a muddy Nebraska farm field waiting for the soil to breathe. Ten Iraqi representatives from the Ministries Agriculture and Water Resources with one from Baghdad University traveled to Lincoln for a two-week training the latter half of April intended to contribute to the development of a national soil survey. At the National Soil Survey Center, the training was organized by Dr. Rebecca Burt, a Research Soil Scientist there who previously served at Embassy Baghdad as the Soil and Water Conservation Advisor. By improving soil identification, Iraq will be better able how to allocate land resources to crop, fruit and vegetable production. All of the scientists who made the visit are senior professionals and most earned advanced university degrees in the United States or Europe.

Ministry of Agriculture Implements Changes to Move Agriculture Forward – With the recent approval of certain hybrid corn varieties for sale and production as well as a recently announced ministry tender for imported cattle semen, the Ministry of Agriculture has signaled its adoption of improved technology that will benefit local corn growers as well as livestock producers. The Office of Agricultural Affairs continues to encourage Ministry awareness and acceptance of international agricultural production norms.

Personnel Update - There are currently 27 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units.

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